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The Family Is a Church in Miniature

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After the public worship of God we will spread two tables in our houses, one with the fare of the body and one with the food of Holy Scripture; one with the fruits of earth, and one with the fruits of the Holy Ghost. Prayer and teaching in the church are not enough; they must be accompanied by prayer and reading at home: for the home is a little church, *an ecclesia domestica.*

THESE are the words of the Father of the Church who is called the Apostle of the Laity, Saint John Chrysostom.[1]

The home, the family—a church! That has for many in our modern world the accent of a foreign tongue. But it is just the tongue that needs to be understood again today when we consider that in the family lies the foundation of Christianity itself in the world.

"The family is a little church." It follows that the family represents Christ in His relation to men, and gives reality to that relation; and that it has special

1 See in Genesim VI, 2; VII, 1; in Ephesios XX, 6; in Matthaeum XXXII, 7.

bearing in the Church as a whole. This finds expression at once in the amazing fact that the Sacrament of Matrimony, which establishes the family, is the only sacrament administered by the subjects to themselves; that it is, moreover, the only one which it is quite impossible for a priest to administer: layfolk alone can do it, while all the other sacraments may normally be administered only by the priest. The other sacraments, except Holy Orders, are means of grace to the individual soul. Matrimony and Holy Orders, on the other hand, are in a special manner social sacraments. They impart grace for a society: Matrimony for the society of man and wife and of the family, Holy Orders for the members of the Church.

The grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony is grace for a holy life on the part of husband and wife, and a consecration to God of the children born of this sacrament. This sacrament is alone called by Saint Paul the "great sacrament," and just "for the reason of its mysterious relation to Christ and to His Church." This mysterious relation consists in the fact that the Sacrament of Matrimony is for the married pair and their children what Christ is for His Church, and in the manner that Christ is to His Church, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Finisher. Through the sacrament, matrimony and the family become a society dispensing grace. Thus we can say that the Church and wedlock are the only grace-dispensing societies. This blessing upon matrimony, says the Church in the nuptial blessing of the marriage Mass, is "alone uncancelled by the curse of Original Sin and the judgment of the Deluge." There is, according to the words of the Church's prayer, no blessing whatever that is of such unbroken efficacy as the nuptial blessing. Through the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony husband and wife are bearers of salvation and instruments of salvation each to the other and both to the children. After the bride and bridegroom have administered to themselves the Sacrament of Matri-

mony, neither of them is henceforth responsible for self alone. Man and wife are before God a unity.

As the Church shelters a treasure of graces gathered from the merits of the saints, so the family embraces a treasure of vicarious love, vicarious faith, vicarious suffering, so that the weakness and failings of one are repaired by the pains of the others. There is great comfort in the thought that in certain circumstances just one member who understands what is at stake is enough to save a whole family.

The marriage state like the Church stands full of mystery beneath the Cross, beneath the sign of our Redemption.[2] The Church and the family are both of them sacrificial communities.

Why is the will to have children dying out, and often already dead? Because marriage is not understood and is not willed as a fellowship with Christ in the Crucifixion and in the Redemption. For Christian man and wife here lies the marriage crisis: fellowship in the Crucifixion or severance from those who stand with Christ and His Church. It is not un-Christian to lay just blame upon the human element in the Church. Such criticism has been the life struggle of many saints, from Saint Paul to Catharine of Sienna and to our own day. But it is unchristian not to understand that the Church can only be where life-fellowship and blood-fellowship with Christ are professed and practised. Christian matrimony then is not for its own sake, is not directed to the happiness of the individual, but to reciprocal faith and to its fruit, the child. Our Church is not one of comfortable exterior practices that end with going to church on Sunday, but a Church Militant, a Church of combatants. This is expressed by the wedded pair not only in being elevated to the Cross, but

[2] Sacramentum est et signum rememorativum eius quod praecessit, scilicet passionis Christi; et demonstrativum eius quod in nobis efficitur per Christi passionem, scilicet gratiae; et prognosticum, id est, praenuntiativum futurae gloriae. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q. LX, art. 3.

in raising the Cross before the world. They manifest by what they are the struggle of spiritual and religious men. Just when a special blessing ought to flow from the family, when nothing is so wanting to society as the spirit of the family, just then must the family stand beneath the Cross, must it be crucified with Christ and His Church; for only so can it fulfil its office in the Redemption. Further, only where matrimony is felt as a grave responsibility, as a religious venture, only where it is understood in its overwhelming earnestness, is it truly an image of the love of Christ for the Church. Suffering borne over the perilous state, especially felt in marriage, of the religious life of mankind, suffering over the immense difficulty of achieving a perfected love of God in a perfected love of man and wife, and the unceasing effort renewed to that end day by day, this is the service marriage contributes in the Redemption, its way to the fulfilment of the Redemption, to the fulness of the stature of Christ. By reason of its part in the Redemption, matrimony is embedded in the Holy Mass, founded thus in union with the re-enactment of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Only as a sacrificial society does the family represent the great sacrificial society of mankind, the Church. The crisis of the family is therefore no objection to the Christian character of the family; rather it is the proof of the mission of the Christian family to our time. For through this very fact, that it stands beneath the folly of the Cross, has the family mission and grace to meet the present need.

The Church is the fellowship of Christ's redeemed, a fellowship of love and faith forever renewed: just this is the family too. It is not an organization, a monster organization classified in a vast filing cabinet into dioceses, parishes, families, individual members. It is not an organization the parts of which lose meaning as they stand farther removed from the center. The Church is an organism that is built up and that grows like a living body. It is built up of families, parishes, dio-

ceses. The Christian family would have been possible without the Church; but not the Church without the family. The model and prototype of the Christian family existed before the Church—in Nazareth. From families spring parishes, from parishes dioceses; and the sum of the dioceses is the Church. Ignatius Döllinger, possibly recalling the words quoted above from Saint John Chrysostom, put it thus:

> So matrimony is itself in turn a church in little; it is the kernel around which the domestic church first formed; and from the several domestic churches grew the community; from the communities, the great structure of the Christian Church Universal, the Bride, the Body of Christ.[3]

The family is prerequisite to the Church's continued existence in the outward sense because it gives her children; in the inner because it trains them in the spirit of the Church. The family is the mother and nurse of each and every form of the supernatural life. Thus it is that Holy Scripture and the Liturgy constantly echo the language of the home. As likeness of the supernatural life, no state is so often evoked as that of bride and bridegroom, of father, of mother, of child. The constitution of Religious Orders has been built to the model of the family. According to the Rule of Saint Benedict, the Father Abbot has no higher end than to be to the monks what a father is to the family. Father, Mother, Brother, Sister—so we address the monks and nuns and members of lay congregations. So we continually recall to their minds the model of the family. Far more however than all this, does it speak for the fundamental meaning of the family in the Christian life, that God Incarnate, whose imitation is the unique object of every Christian's striving for perfection, for thirty long years lived in the family circle, and that He dedicated not more than a tenth as much time to the fulfilling of His messianic mission.

The family is the basic social form for the penetra-

[3] *Christentum und Kirche in der Zeit der Grundlegung*2 (1868), p. 385.

tion of the world with the Church. It is the classical form through which Christ, living on in His Church, comes forth into the temporal order and leads the temporal order to God. It is the classical form because it embraces the fulness of life's every rôle, and all the vicissitudes of life in common—man and wife, old and young, coming into being and passing away, growth and decline, health and sickness; and because it involves all the changing relationships of the members of the family with one another and with the outer world. In the family, Christ is built into the changing generations as the true corner stone of history; for in the sanctified succession of the generations Christ works immediately upon the making of history. So Christ wills to be through marriage the *ligamentum caritatis*—connecting tissue of charity—and the *vinculum pacis*—bond of peace—for the whole race of the Redeemed, the bond of love between past and future generations, the bond of peace among all the members of a family, a stock, a national community, the community of the nations, among all who bear the face of man. In Christ all humanity becomes the *familia Dei*, the family of God.

The Church then is made up of families. The family on its side is secured in its essential constitution through the Church, from whose treasure of grace the blessing of the marriage sacrament, purest and most powerful of all the Church's blessings, is drawn. Only as immediately commissioned by the Church at large, empowered by her and endowed with grace by her, is the Church in little—man and wife and child—equal to so great a function—to be like the Church at large a grace-dispensing society, a sacrificial society, a society of Christ's redeemed in love and faith.

When we realize all this, at once we stand before the grave question: has the family fulfilled this function? A glance at the world within us and around us, and we know the answer. If the family were what it should and could be, a society of grace, of love, of faith,

of sacrifice, how then could so unwholesome a state of things be possible in the world? After centuries of struggle with the native paganism of fallen man, the morning glow of a Christian way of life scarcely rose on our western folk—the hour when Gregorian chant was folksong, and the cathedral rose in lasting witness to the spiritual stature of common men, when Saint Francis sang the Hymn of the Sun and Dante trod the path through Hell over the Mount of Purgatory to Paradise—even in that hour the evening shades of secularism, of worldliness, of laicism fell upon our world. How could this be? One of the decisive causes of this tragedy of Western history—I say expressly one, it is not the only one, but it is the one that has hardly been noticed hitherto—lies without doubt in the fact that the family had not been formed to the Christian mould in the same measure as other states of life, for example the religious state. The teaching of the Church on marriage and the family has always been the same; but that teaching has not been brought home to the common consciousness of Christians with all its creative power. The state of the family has never reached its season of full bloom, has never known a *reformatio*, a transformation, as did the monastic state in the twelfth century. In that twelfth century, to deepen and renew the monastic life such mighty Christian figures as Bruno of Cologne, founder of the Carthusians, Bernard of Clairvaux, master of the Cistercians, Norbert of Ghent, founder of hte Premonstratensians, Hildegard of Bingen, mistress of the Benedictines, worked side by side. And these are but a few from the hundreds in a single century. How astonishingly meager by comparison is the number of canonized saints in all the Christian centuries whose holiness bears the stamp of the Christian family—of husband, of wife, of father, of mother! I do not know whether there is even one canonized woman saint who is neither Virgin nor Martyr nor Widow.

Christendom then after the splendor of its dawn has seen no high noon of world transformation. The blurring, the *deformatio* of the Christian spirit, the process of dechristianization set in early. Now the dark, cold night has fallen, night on the East, night on the West, night on Russia, night on Spain. Has any generation since the coming of Our Lord been witness of such abomination in holy places as ours? Surely not. What it took centuries to bring to expression, what for other centuries stood as witness of the Faith, this our generation has destroyed. Far worse, however, than that buildings should be blown into the air, that men for their Faith's sake should be robbed of liberty, homeland and life, far worse is it that untruth, injustice, revolt, not God's but Satan's spirit, is sown in the hearts of children. Where is the root of this Tree of Death that spreads its branches over us from Russia to Spain? We say Christendom has failed. Yes, but surely today there is as much prayer, prayer as truly interior, as much sacrifice, as much striving after union with God, as there ever was in any Christian period. Who knows if not more? If, however, it is true that the family is the basis for the penetration of the world with the Church, then the family has failed. What is clear today is the fact that for many generations we have not hedged round the fountainhead of all the streams of Christian life with the solicitude, above all the veneration we were in duty bound to bring. Dark, cold night has fallen over us, and the shadow of death covers us, because the light of faith in our homes but glimmers now and is often already quenched; because the hearthfire of love has grown cold; and because we have denied entrance to the Light of Life. The family is at fault. It has not fulfilled its duty. It has not corresponded with grace.

Humanly speaking, the family had to fail, because it did not in its difficult mission feel itself supported by the universal Christian consciousness, because we so

often have had no understanding and no love for struggling fathers and mothers, because all of us have failed to pray enough for it. Many priests have failed to see the full grandeur of the family. And we for our part have so cumbered its holy precincts with the joys and cares of the world that often no tiny place was left for the everlasting Lamp, the Christ-enkindled fire of love, the light of faith. Thus only slender forces of love and faith or none at all could stream out of it upon the world, out of that which is nevertheless the grand reservoir of these forces.

Conversion, therefore, re-christianization of the family is necessary. That does not indeed mean that particular practices of piety must again be taken up, such as were usual in the families of our parents and grandparents, the Beads in common for example on the evenings of Lent. These are not essential. We must demand nothing that is incompatible with the even course of other duties. It is upon the essential alone that the conversion must bear. That, however, must under all circumstances be guarded and cherished. The essential is first the understanding of the Christian family, of what it is in its inmost sense, the consciousness of its high worth, this on the part of the individual and on the part of Christian society; above all, the development of its fundamental character not through doing or saying a great deal, but through the fact of being what a Christian ought to be in the state of husband, wife, father, mother, child.

The Christian reality of the husband, the wife is defined by the sense of their sacramental union: that is, they, as a unity, stand to Christ in the relationship in which the Church stands to Him. This unity is lived in their conjugal love.

Christian conjugal love has for its goal the union of husband and wife in God. Non-Christian marriage, too, can produce a fuller perfection of existence in man and wife, a fruitfulness both spiritual and corporal.

The unity, however, of two mortal persons in an immortal Person distinguishes Christian from all non-Christian marriage. As Christ and His Church form one mystical Christ, so should husband and wife in the perfection of their unity form Christ. For the relationship of marriage and family to the Church is more than likeness and symbol. The sacrament is not only a sign but also grace. It not only signifies everlasting life but it imparts everlasting life. Marriage binds husband and wife not only with one another, but, as husband and wife, as father and mother, with God. Thus do we understand why the finest flower of the religious life, the soul's mystical union with God, is continually likened to marriage. This uniting for sanctification of husband and wife, of parents and children, is the deepest meaning of marriage and the family.

Marriage, therefore, is no compromise with the world; it is no escape for those who believe they are not called to the perfection of the Christian life. On the contrary, it is often the more painful, more difficult way to an equal height, often a way that demands greater forces for the spiritualizing and transforming of its subject-matter than the immediate way of the state of virginity. That is a point on which our education has quite missed the mark. Marriage is relegated to the margin, to the outer zone of the Christian life. It is almost made into the state of imperfection, into the receptacle of human weakness. Where then will young people find the courage, the heroic courage to plant marriage and the family beneath the Cross? We must have it clear in our conscience and express it in our whole conduct that there are no Christians of the first and second zone, that married folk are not "half-Christians," a conception that no one perhaps has so pointedly assailed as Saint John Chrysostom. The injunction, Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect, holds just as unconditionally and is therefore just as binding and just as feasible for married Christians as it is for those

vowed to celibacy. The level of the Christian's perfection is independent of his state of life. The two fundamental types of Christian life, virginity and marriage, are the only possible ways for us to follow, as man or woman, the line of our deepest destiny, for us to perfect ourselves according to God's will through love. Both the fundamental types of Christian life, marriage and virginity, so support and condition one another that without the holy state of virginity no holy state of matrimony and of family life is possible, and inversely without the seed-plot of the Christian family no virginal souls will waken. A religious structure of marriage is demanded and in many respects is indispensably sustained by those who are vowed to celibacy, who as the embodiment of the spirit's sovereignty over matter are the staunch props of Christian Matrimony and the family.

Holy love is the meaning of both states of life. There are not two divided loves; there is only one love. This, for the life of the soul, is one of the weightiest truths we can know. Just this is the effect of the "unbroken nuptial blessing": the grace of the perfect love of God through the perfect love of husband and wife, progressive union with God through progressive union in God of man and wife in conjugal love. Here lies the solution of the difficult question of every Christian: How is it possible to love God with one's whole soul and at the same time to love a creature in the measure called for by bridal and conjugal love? That, in the order in which we live, is impossible without the sacrament, without an established immediacy of relationship between marriage and Christ. Through this relationship, out of human weakness is wrought a strength that enables human beings to fulfil what is in the fullest sense a fundamental human function, a function in which as nowhere else faith in Christ, the Crucified, has to be strong. The wedding-day, the day that leads on so often to religion's snowing under, ought to be the

beginning of a new religious life. *Nunc fac eos plenius benedicere te,* sings the Church in the *Introit* of the Nuptial Mass: Now may they with fuller accord praise Thee—from this day on more than heretofore. From this day on the word holds true, Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Henceforward husband and wife at the offertory of every Mass offer their marriage, their family, and at last their widowhood to the Heavenly Father as a blessed, a valid, a spiritual, a well-pleasing oblation.

The right relationship between husband wife is the virtue of love. The fundamental virtue of the man in relation to his child is fatherliness; of the woman, motherliness. Fatherliness is love; motherliness, faith. Naturally the father, too, has the virtue of faith, and the mother the virtue of love. But the characteristic of fatherhood is love; of motherhood, faith. Few words have so great a value as "father." The God-Man has sanctified it in that he has given us the God of Christians as Our Father, in that he has taught us to pray the *Our Father.* In almost every discourse of Our Lord the word "father" is found, and no other has so deep, so luminous a tone in the New Testament. All fatherhood in Heaven and on earth has its name from the Fatherhood of God, that is to say its value and its responsibility. As symbol, as living mirror of the Heavenly Father, as sharer in the work of creation, the father is head of the family. Most fathers, even in Catholic families, do not dream of the exaltedness of their state. No one would be so surprised as they if a bishop today were to begin a sermon to men with the words, "My dear brothers and fellow bishops"! So Augustine begins the sermon in which he speaks of the duties of the father of a family: *Domini fratres et coepiscopi mei.* The father of a family is an *episcopus,* so he says, because he watches over the home, and watches as one who bears responsibility. "Each and

every one of you," says Augustine to the fathers of his flock, "has in his home the bishop's office (*episcopatus officium*), to see to it that neither his wife nor his son nor his daughter nor even his servant fall away from the truth; for they are bought at a dear price." [4] What a bishop is for the diocese, that the father is for his family, one who has the care of souls, the cure of souls, for his mission. This conception of the father as one whose office it is to care for the souls of his family, the wife must plant deep in her heart and in the hearts of the children, and so recall it to the consciousness of the father himself. It is the motherly wife who bestows upon the world the fatherly man; it is she who unseals the strong fountain of father-love. From his being really a father, from his constant gift of himself in his goodness, from his generous protection, from his watchful care, the children learn to love God as Father. How much godlessness, whether in its most widespread form, that God as a reality has never entered into one's conscious life, or that the light of God has been dimmed or quenched, goes back to the fact that in youth men have not had the idea of father set before them, or only a disfigured and a sullied idea!

The essence of motherliness is faith, the steadfast hope of the future possibility of all things good. Who says mother, says the future, says life. One who is ever ready to look death in the face, in order to give life, is full of hope. How fine is the expression: She is expectant—she is filled with the inconceivably great power of faith. Yes, as the Church shelters for mankind the *depositum fidei*, the treasure of faith, so the mother safeguards it for the family. The father is the likeness of the Heavenly Father, the mother is the image of the Church, of the *Mater Ecclesia*: or rather the representation of the Church as Mother was and is built upon this most readily grasped of all human figures. Ours it is to grasp once more the conception of the mother,

[4] Sermo XCIV: Migne, P. L., XXXVIII, 580, 581.

with all that is strong, venerable, mysterious, yes prophetic in its import. As the guardian of faith, as the keeper of tradition, as hope-bearer, the mother is the heart of the family.

The Church in her prayer over the mother-to-be prays to God, "Give to them"—to mother and child—"the everlasting Light." That is the Church's first prayer for the little one to come, the prayer for light. It is the last prayer that Mother Church pronounces at the open grave. Eternal light is besought in a single prayer for mother and child. For the task of kindling the light of faith in the soul of the child, of nourishing, of shielding it, is the great mission of the mother. Saint Augustina once said to his mother:

> I believe without question and I affirm that God through your prayers has bestowed on me a spirit that sets nothing above the effort after Truth, that wills nothing, thinks nothing, loves nothing so much as Truth. And I believe that I shall obtain through your prayers the everlasting goods after which I long, and to which you have awakened me.[5]

One can give no more beautiful expression to the thought that the mother, along with the natural life of the child, awakes and nourishes the germ of the supernatural life. Even before birth, the mother through her prayer, through her then so vigilant union with God, prepares the soul of her child for the sowing of faith, of hope, of charity. Then full of joy she hands over her babe to Mother Church, that she, from her mother's womb, the baptismal font, may bring it to birth anew. The child of earthly parents returns to the arms of its mother a child of God. And in this holiest moment of her life the mother realizes possibly for the first time what wonder is, what grace, what Redemption.

As a child of God the child is to be reared. Just that alone is a prodigious task. But today it is crushing as never before, now that it rests almost wholly on the

[5] De ord. II, c. 20: Migne, P. L., XXXII, 1019.

shoulders, so often weak, so often ill-prepared, of the father and mother. Doubly hard it is when there is no environment, no cathedral spire, no wayside shrine, to re-enforce the parents' care. How warm must the love of the father be, how clear the mother's faith, so that in the short years during which the family really encircles the children they become so warmed and enlightened through and through, that in spite of the cold and darkness of the world they never fall away from love and from faith, yes, that they radiate Christian love and Christian faith in their professional and work-aday life, in their many-sided fellowship with men, and that they know—essential point—how to re-enkindle this fire at their own hearth.

It is not words that bring results with children, however right and fine and oft-repeated they may be. Words are straw; only the deed, the fact of being are fertile seed. From the Christian fact of the father and the mother, the children learn to understand what it means to love God as Father, and the Church as Mother. That is the heart of religious formation. Only love wakens love; only faith enkindles faith. This is what Christ means by prayer without ceasing; not that we pray continuously in words, but that our conduct be that of a human being who lives in the presence of God. There is no need then of many prayers in common in the family. For the husband and wife, prayer in common should be a matter of course, and for the smaller children. As for the older children, who come even for their meals at irregular hours, the attendance at Sunday Mass and the reception of Holy Communion with the breakfast afterward should so far as possible be in common. Apart from other circumstances, this is not a simple matter to compass in our parishes, for the reason that the family is usually split up at Holy Communion into school-children, young ladies, young men, mothers (markedly less often, fathers). Through the appearance of the whole family together at Mass and at the

Holy Table, we must help our parish priests to restore the parish to its natural state, which is a union of families.

Sons and daughters today no longer let themselves be drawn into the life-pattern of their parents; but with their own psychological identity intact they let themselves be enveloped by the religious reality of their parents' lives; and they wish to be enveloped by it if this life is indeed genuine and strong. And they have a fine sense to feel whether it is or not. They do not desire that their parents throw themselves into the ranks of youth and join it on the march; but they unconditionally desire that their parents do the things they teach, that they be what they tell their children to be. And that they do it of their proper determination and with the gravity of those who have felt the impact of the resisting forces. Here is the kingly priesthood of parents, here their office of shepherd and of teacher. Here is authority in its original sense, as it belongs to parents and to the Church. Such veritable authority, *auctoritas*, authorship of mental and spiritual being, cannot undertake to have a ready answer to every question. Of what it is, it kindles the love of children, love that does not die down but grows ever finer with the oncoming maturity of the young, who will often surpass the parents in knowledge.

Alongside a Christendom sorely diminished, other worlds are building, closed in and proud. In general it is not possible for parents to loose the stones one by one out of this un-Christian world, and to demolish their credibility to young souls by proofs and syllogisms. That would require not only theological learning, large stores of it, but also philosophy, history, economics, and a variety of other subjects. The essential contents of the Faith will naturally be imparted to the children by their parents; but obviously the great truths are quickly received. Communication of knowledge, however, is not enough. It comes to this—and parents, too,

are developed marvelously in the process—to live forth convincingly, however simply, the Christian's world: Love lived, Faith lived. When the young man in his doubts, in his unbelief, in his heart's coldness knows that his father and mother are strong in faith and in love, that his unrest is folded into their life of prayer, that is often the decisive factor and suffices in times of crisis more than anything else. How beautiful it is when the one prayer lives on in a child that has fallen far from God, "Help my unbelief, and look upon the faith of my mother," as indeed we all pray to God that He look not upon our unbelief, but on the faith of Our Mother, the Church. Outside the family, such a child will feel itself in a strange land; and it will keep strong root always in the love of its father, in the faith of its mother.

The different Christian epochs, according to their special needs, have brought to the foreground distinct types of saintly living. Thus in the first Christian centuries, in which the struggle centered above all upon faith, there were the holy figures of confessors and martyrs; thus in the flush vitality of the Middle Ages, intemperate and unrestrained, came the monks and nuns in their detachment and self-discipline. The need of our cold and darkened age calls for the saint whose heroic virtue bears the imprint of the Sacrament of Matrimony, of the family life. As husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, with the almost insupportable responsibility we bear for ourselves and our children, we need the example and the intercession of holy married men and women, holy fathers, holy mothers. To the invocation of the Litany of All Saints, all holy priests and levites, all holy monks and hermits pray for us, we must learn to add: All holy husbands and fathers pray for us; and to the invocation, All holy virgins and widows pray for us, we must be bold to add: All holy wives and mothers, pray for us. As never a generation before us, we need this example and this inter-

cession; for in our families, as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, we have the Church of Christ to save. It depends upon the family whether the Church is to be saved in a country or destroyed. The Church as a whole has, it is true, the promise that she will never succumb till the end of time. But this promise is not made to every province of the Church. Whether in a given land the Church is to abide depends not on external things, not even on whether church buildings and convents are destroyed, nor even in the last resort on the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but upon this, that the men and women who have administered to one another the Sacrament of Matrimony, from the grace of this sacrament transform their families into little churches. That—no more no less—is in this hour the one thing needful.

Teachers Must Be Christlike

Excerpt from an article in Journal of Religious Instruction, *June, 1938*

IN the work of forming other Christs two factors must be considered: the teacher and method of teaching. Of these two the former is the more important, for immediately there comes to mind "we cannot give that which we have not ourselves." Hence, achieving the purpose of education necessitates at the outset the teacher's being Christlike. It is trite but true that we shout what we are regardless of what we say; others are always influenced less by what we teach than by the life we live. Dr. Kirsch brings this out when he says:

> The life the teacher lives, and above all what in her inmost soul she hopes, believes, and loves—these factors have a far deeper and more potent influence than mere lessons can ever have. . . . She imprints herself, not her words, on the sensitive souls before her.[1]

Foerster expresses the same idea but from a different angle in the following:

> The influence of one man on another is the result, not so much of a superior technique of reasoning and of method, as of a dominant quality of mind, of properly controlled feelings . . . not what we say during the day but what we are—the victories we gain over ourselves in the long hours of the sleepless night—what we have accomplished interiorly: this is what gives us the power over men that is efficacious in the work of education. The most important method of education is not the direct but the indirect.[2]

Thus, if the teacher is an *alter Christus*, she will be like a high power line carrying heavy charges of Christ's personality electrifying all with the virtues of Christ. If not, she will be as a weak current merely ringing the bells of faint worldly praise.

[1] Rev. Felix M. Kirsch, O.M.Cap., "The Religious Teacher," *The Catholic Educational Review*, v. 23, pp. 619, 620.

[2] Frederich W. Foerster, *Erziehung und Selbsterziehung*, pp. 15, 16.

Religion in the Home

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WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, who is known quite universally in this country for his sane views upon life, contributed a much-needed article to a current magazine recently on "Religion in the Home." He maintains that people about to be married need training in character much more than they need instruction in sex. "Of all essential things," he says, "the most essential in married life and in the bringing up of children is religion. . . . Religion will improve daily manners. Husband and wife will not take each other for granted; they will not become stodgy or commonplace or stereotyped." We wonder how many of our bickering husbands and wives have ever tried the experiment of applying a little religion to their daily problems. Religion, of course, will not take the place of poor cooking or remove the peculiarities of an ingrained disposition, but it will do wonders towards enabling the recipients to bear those provocations with a more benevolent mind.